

WASHINGTON D.C. (April 7, 2009) – Rep. Michael Honda's Student Advisory Council is hosting its Annual Youth Conference, with a focus on student privacy rights, on May 31, 2009, from 1:00 – 3:30 p.m. at Cupertino Community Hall at 10300 Torre Ave, Cupertino, CA. The Student Advisory Council (SAC), which Rep. Honda created to foster and inform youth civic engagement, maintains 27 student representatives, comprised of two students from each high school in California's 15th congressional district. The student-run Council is committed to community service and outreach and provides feedback to Rep. Honda on important issues impacting youth in the area.

On the council's contributions, Rep. Honda noted, "As a former teacher, principal and school board member, I recognize the importance of the youth voice in Congress and how active civic engagement among youth enables a more vibrant democracy. The Student Advisory Council's upcoming conference on student privacy rights can help inform a gamut of issues – from military access to the appropriate parameters within new technology. I look forward to their conference findings and encourage all students, parents and teachers to participate in this prescient and timely discussion."

According to SAC, this year's conference recognizes that with the growth of social networking programs like Facebook and My Space, students are facing new issues that raise questions about the protection of their rights. SAC representatives believe that a discussion on their privacy rights and freedoms of expression is critical. This year's conference, entitled "It's Right, To Know Your Rights", welcomes thoughts on students' rights from other young people in California's 15th District and informs the greater Silicon Valley about the impact of school policies on students.

"We've heard a lot of stories where we think schools have gone beyond their reach," said Mark Vidunas, a student co-chair of the SAC public relations committee, "stories about school administrators going on students' Facebook and MySpace accounts and later disciplining students, even going so far as suspending them. By making this our conference topic, we think that we can bring attention to these events and hopefully get some lines drawn, giving students more privacy."

Rep. Honda believes in the value of student-run forums like the Student Advisory Council and their ability to foster leadership, responsibility, civic engagement and dialogue. At this conference of students, teachers, parents, and administrators, the Student Advisory Council seeks to amplify the student voice in schools. Throughout the conference, SAC members hope to highlight students' rights and suggest ways in which teachers and administrators can ensure the school environment is a safe environment for students to learn and grow.